NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF **CHALLENGE GRANTS**

CREATING HUMANITIES COMMUNITIES

Deadline: February 15, 2017

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 45.130

If after reading this document you have questions about this grant program, contact the staff of NEH's Office of Challenge Grants at 202-606-8309 or at challenge@neh.gov.

Contents

I. Program Description

The Creating Humanities Communities program provides matching grants to help stimulate and proliferate meaningful humanities activities in states and U.S. territories underserved by NEH's grantmaking divisions and offices. Grantees will use the funds to establish and undertake new humanities programs.

The goal of these grants is to make connections between organizations that will foster community cohesion on a local or regional level. Applicants may define community in a variety of ways (by focusing, for example, on a place such as a village or town, or on a common interest or a common theme), and the programs that the cooperating institutions carry out together must aim to enhance the importance of the humanities in people's lives.

Projects to create a humanities community might include, for example, collaborations linking

- a public library and a nearby community college to research, write, and produce a series of video biographies of the town's important personalities (to be presented in public programs at the local historical movie palace);
- several railroad museums throughout a state that join forces to write a transportation-based curriculum module for use in fourth-grade social studies classes;
- three Native American tribes to establish a cultural heritage trail highlighting important sites and collections;
- a veterans' group and a high school in developing intergenerational family programs at local historic sites; and
- a public radio station and the philosophy department at a local college to host public programs discussing industry and ethics to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the town's paper mill.

Applicants to this program must form collaborative partnerships with at least two and at most five institutions (including the applicant organization). These partnerships may involve organizations such as public libraries, cultural centers, museums, historical societies, colleges (including community colleges) and universities, archival repositories, historic houses, school districts, civic centers, or other cultural entities.

Although this competition calls for multiple institutions to collaborate, a single organization must serve as the lead agent and formal applicant of record. State and territorial humanities councils may not be lead applicants but may function as partner organizations.

NEH welcomes applications from small and mid-sized institutions that have never received an NEH grant as well as partnerships of organizations in rural areas.

NEH especially encourages projects that include Native American organizations and communities as lead applicants and project partners.

Activities supported

As noted above, Creating Humanities Communities grants support humanities activities—that is, activities that seek to understand and explain the significance of what people have thought, done, and achieved, both in the past and in our time. To be a bit more specific, humanities fields explore topics like these: the philosophy, literature, art, and music that we create; the battles that we fight; the polities and societies in which we live; the social forces that unite and divide us; the work that we do; and the religions in which we believe. Humanities fields approach topics like these primarily by means of qualitative (interpretive, critical, speculative, historical) methods rather than exclusively by means of quantitative methods.

Institutions may use Creating Humanities Communities grants (including the required matching amount) to meet new or ongoing costs related to humanities programs. For example, grantees may use funds to support

- salaries and benefits for humanities staff;
- acquisitions for collections;
- public programming and outreach expenses;
- media or digitization costs;
- staff, teacher, or faculty development opportunities;
- visiting researchers, scholars, or consultants;
- computer support; and
- travel expenses.

Applicants are encouraged to speak with Challenge Grants staff about their program ideas.

Expenditures not eligible for support

Creating Humanities Communities grants may not be used for

- o construction or renovation of facilities;
- o programs that seek to promote a particular political, religious, or ideological point of view;
- o programs that advocate social action; or
- o programs designed for activities outside the scope of the humanities, such as the creation of art works, the performing arts, science education, non-humanistic aspects of the social sciences, or public policy advocacy. Projects that deal with the visual or performing arts are eligible for funding only if they enhance the interpretation or analysis of the artistic form in question, using critical, historical, theoretical, or other humanities perspectives. Projects in the social sciences must use humanistic (qualitative) methods.

Award information

NEH will offer successful applicants a one-to-one matching grant, divided incrementally over three years. The funds that NEH provides will match the funds raised by grantees from nonfederal third parties. See the explanation of matching funds below.

A grant will be offered in one of four amounts of the applicant's choosing: $30,000, $60,000, $90,000, or $150,000. The requested grant amount should be appropriate to the humanities needs and the fundraising capacity of the applicant. Please note that grantees must expend all grant funds on the programs that they propose by the end of the grant period—January 31, 2021.

Applicants may request the following amounts of money:

Total from NEH	2018	2019	2020	Total NEH and 1:1 Third-Party Match
$30,000	$5,000	$10,000	$15,000	$60,000
$60,000	$10,000	$20,000	$30,000	$120,000
$90,000	$15,000	$30,000	$45,000	$180,000
$150,000	$25,000	$50,000	$75,000	$300,000

Matching funds

When matching funds are requested, the applicant must raise contributions from nonfederal third parties and have them certified before the grant funds are released to the grantee (see NEH's Federal Matching Funds Guidelines).

Annual certification of gifts is due no later than February 1, 2018 for year one of the grant, February 1, 2019 for year two of the grant, and February 1, 2020 for year three of the grant. Grantees must expend all funds by January 31, 2021.

The fundraising period for applications submitted at the February 15, 2017 deadline may begin as early as February 1, 2017, to give collaborative partnerships a head start on raising third-party gifts. Note that the collaborating institutions must assist the lead institution in raising funds from nonfederal third parties.

Here is a hypothetical fundraising schedule for a $30,000 NEH grant:

Certification Date	NEH Matching Funds	Funds Raised from Third Parties	Total
February 1, 2018	$5,000	$5,000 in individual gifts	$10,000
February 1, 2019	$10,000	$10,000 community foundation grant	$20,000
February 1, 2020	$15,000	$15,000 bequest	$30,000
All funds must be expended by January 31, 2021.			$60,000

The grant period for all Creating Humanities Communities grants begins February 1 of the application year and ends January 31, forty-eight months later. Awards made for applications submitted at the February 15, 2017 deadline will have a grant period beginning on February 1, 2017, and ending on January 31, 2021.

Eligibility

Each year, NEH compiles comparative funding data for the preceding year. Based on this data, NEH designates twenty states with the lowest funding levels[1] as "incentive areas" to compete in the Creating Humanities Communities program. Applicants from the following U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands) are eligible to apply in 2017, as are the following states:

Alabama	Iowa	New Mexico	South Dakota
Alaska	Kentucky	North Dakota	Utah
Arkansas	Montana	Oklahoma	Vermont
Hawaii	Nebraska	Rhode Island	West Virginia
Idaho	Nevada	South Carolina	Wyoming

State eligibility may change from year to year based on future comparative funding levels.

Institutions or organizations from states not listed above (and from U.S. territories) may collaborate in projects. But the formal applicant of record as well as a majority of the collaborating partners (two of three; three of four or five) must be located in one of the incentive states (or in an eligible U.S. territory).

---

[1] Levels are based on the ranking of individual states receiving funds from NEH's grantmaking divisions and offices. Grants provided to state humanities councils through the Federal/State Partnership are not included in this calculation.

U.S. nonprofit organizations with IRS tax-exempt status, state and local governmental agencies, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments are eligible to apply (provided that they are located in one of the incentive states or in an eligible territory). State humanities councils are not eligible to apply as lead applicants; they may, however, function as partner organizations. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

A lead institution may apply for only one Creating Humanities Communities grant in a calendar year.

Lead applicants to the Creating Humanities Communities program may also apply for and receive grants from the Next Generation Humanities PhD program, as well as the Humanities Access Grants program (provided that they are eligible to apply to those programs).

Recipients of Challenge Grants (whose grant numbers start with CH-) are not eligible to apply as lead applicant to the Creating Humanities Communities program until three years after the end of their grants. Recipients of Challenge Grants for Two-Year Colleges (whose grant numbers start with CZ-) are not eligible to apply as lead applicants to the Creating Humanities Communities program until one year after the end of their grants.

NEH generally does not award grants to other federal entities or to applicants whose projects are so closely intertwined with a federal entity that the project takes on characteristics of the federal entity's own authorized activities. This does not preclude applicants from using grant funds from, or sites and materials controlled by, other federal entities in their projects.

Grantees may not use federally appropriated funds to match NEH grants, whether such funds are disbursed directly by an agency of the federal government or indirectly through another organization (for example, an agency of a state government or a state humanities council).

NEH will not review late, incomplete, or ineligible applications.

II. Preparing and Organizing your Application

Resources for preparing a strong application

To prepare a strong application, applicants are encouraged to take the following steps:
- read these **guidelines** carefully, noting what information needs to be provided in the application;
- read the Frequently Asked Questions document, which is available on the program resource page;
- consult the program's **evaluation criteria**, which are listed immediately below;
- contact the **program staff** (at 202-606-8309 or challenge@neh.gov) to discuss your project and raise any questions you may have about the application; and
- submit an optional **draft proposal**, to which program staff will respond with suggestions and advice.

Evaluation criteria

Applicants should read the program's evaluation criteria (listed immediately below) and ensure that their applications respond to them.

Evaluators are asked to apply the following criteria in assessing applications:

1. **Significance of humanities activities**

   Evaluate the planned activities for their significance and excellence. How do these activities address the community's important humanities goals?

2. **Strength and feasibility of collaborations**

   Have the collaborating entities made realistic plans for the proposed project? Will the partners work well together? What evidence (such as letters of commitment and support) is there of sufficient programmatic and financial commitment to the collaboration? Will the lead organization be able to manage collaborative fundraising and appropriate dispersal of project funds?

3. **Appropriateness of work plan, budget, and staff**

   Is the scope of work realistic? Are the planned grant expenditures described clearly? Are they appropriate? Do project leaders and staff have experience in providing excellent humanities programming within the community?

4. **Evaluation strategy and fundraising**

   Is there a sound evaluation plan to measure the impact that grant funds will have on strengthening and improving the role played by the humanities and humanities institutions within the community? What is the likelihood that institutional partners will be able to meet their fundraising goals collaboratively?

As noted earlier, before they submit a proposal applicants are encouraged to contact program officers, who can offer advice about preparing the proposal. Note in particular that program staff will be available to assist you with the completion of the application (in particular the budget form) via phone (202-606-8309) on the following dates (from 1 P.M. to 3 P.M. EST): January 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, and February 7, 8, and 9, 2017.

Program officers can also review **preliminary proposal drafts** if they are submitted no later than January 16, 2017. Time constraints may prevent staff from reviewing draft proposals submitted after that date. A draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget; applicants should send drafts via e-mail to challenge@neh.gov. Note that draft proposals are optional.

Staff comments on draft proposals are not part of the formal review process and have no bearing on the final outcome of the proposal, but previous applicants in other programs have found them helpful in strengthening their applications. Once NEH has received a formal application, the staff will not comment on its status except with respect to questions of completeness or eligibility.

Application elements

The application consists of a narrative, a budget, participant biographies, letters of commitment and support, and supplementary materials. The font size should be no smaller than eleven-point. All pages should have at least one-inch margins, be collated, and numbered consecutively throughout.

1. **Narrative**

Narrative descriptions are limited to **five single-spaced pages**. The narrative should be free of jargon and accessible to nonspecialists. It should answer the following questions:

   o **What humanities programs and activities are you proposing?**

Introduce and explain the importance of the principal undertakings for which you are seeking support. Provide a work plan for the four years of proposed activities.

   o **How will your project create a humanities community?**

Define what community means for you in terms of geography, interest, profession, theme, or other category and explain how you will develop that community in your project.

   o **Why should the humanities matter in your community?**

Indicate how the proposed activities will help make connections or create cohesion in your community.

   o **Who will take part, who will benefit?**

Name and describe briefly the collaborating organizations and their representatives, as well as the intended audience or audiences. Explain the work of the collaboration or partnership and indicate any planning work you may have undertaken together.

   o **How will you measure success?**

Identify the ways in which you intend to evaluate whether your project's goals have been met.

   o **What is your fundraising strategy?**

This grant intends to stimulate humanities activities in communities in part by building fundraising capacity. State your plans for raising the funds to match NEH's grant. Be specific about each institution's role in the fundraising.

2. **Budget**

Using the instructions and the sample budget, complete the budget form (MS Excel format) or a format of your own that includes all the required information. (You can find links to the budget instructions and budget form on the [program resource page](.)) Applicants should submit their budgets in a font of at least eleven points. Your budget must be free of mathematical errors. While all items should be justified by the narrative, you may include further explanation in brief notes appended to the budget.

If the lead applicant institution is claiming indirect costs and has a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement, submit a copy of the agreement. Do not attach it to your budget form. Instead you must attach it to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File). (See the instructions for this form in the Application Checklist near the end of this document.) Alternatively, you must attach a statement to the form, explaining a) that the applicant institution is not claiming indirect costs; b) that the applicant institution does not

currently have a federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement; or c) that the applicant institution is using the government-wide rate of up to 10 percent of the total direct costs, less distorting items (including but not limited to capital expenditures, participant stipends, fellowships, and the portion of each subgrant or subcontract in excess of $25,000).

3. **Participant biographies**

Include in an appendix a document with **two-paragraph biographies** for the project director and all institutional lead collaborators (up to five).

4. **Letters of commitment and support**

Include in an appendix **no more than seven** letters of commitment or support from partnering organizations and beneficiaries of the proposed humanities activities.

5. **Supplementary materials**

Prepare a document of no more than twenty pages that contains examples (flyers, brochures, other descriptive materials) of current and previous activities from the collaborating organizations. Include a table of contents. Use the first page after the table of contents to describe the relevance of the materials to the proposal.

III. Submitting your Application

To be able to submit an application, applicants must have registered with Grants.gov and must have an updated Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). More detailed information is immediately below.

All applications to this program must be submitted via Grants.gov. NEH strongly recommends that you complete or verify your Grants.gov registration at least two weeks before the application deadline, since it takes time to process your registration.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires federal agencies to make information about the expenditure of tax funds available to the public. To facilitate this, an applicant organization must maintain current information in its Entity record in the System for Award Management (SAM). You must therefore review and update the information in your organization's Entity record at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your organization's information or another award term. In order for your organization to apply for an award via Grants.gov, receive an award, or receive payment on an award, the information in its Entity record must be current. You can update your organization's Entity record [here](). You may need a new SAM User Account to register your organization or update its Entity record. NEH strongly recommends that applicants update (or, if necessary, create) their SAM Entity records at least four weeks before the application deadline.

You can find links to the Grants.gov application package and instructions for preparing and submitting five of the six forms included in the package on the [program resource page](). (The instructions for completing the sixth form are immediately below.)

Instructions for completing the NEH Matching Request Form

As the form states, you must indicate the fiscal years in which you are requesting funds; fiscal years begin on October 1 and end the following September 30. The relevant dates on which matching requests will be made to NEH are the certification dates, which are discussed earlier in these guidelines: the certification dates are February 1, 2018 (which is in fiscal year 2018), February 1, 2019 (which is in fiscal year 2019), and February 1, 2020 (which is in fiscal year 2020).

As a result, the completed form will contain rows for the three years 2018, 2019, and 2020. After you fill out the row for 2018, click on the "Add Year" button to add rows for the second and third years (2019 and 2020).

For each of these years, provide the information requested in columns A, B, C, and D. The amount requested in Column A (Request from NEH) should equal the amount in Column B (Non-federal third-party gifts). For Column C (Cost share), put 0 (zero). For column D, the NEH required match ratio is one-to-one (1:1).

After you have provided the information for the three years of the grant in which fundraising will occur, the numbers in the "TOTAL" row will appear automatically.

After you submit the application, be sure to read the [document](link) (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

Deadlines for submitting optional draft proposals and applications

You are welcome to contact the Office of Challenge Grants to seek advice about preparing the proposal. **Draft proposals are optional, but applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this preliminary review.** A draft should include the full narrative section of the application and the proposed budget; send it by e-mail attachment to challenge@neh.gov. Please submit this document no later than January 16, 2017. It is possible that drafts submitted after that date will not be reviewed.

Grants.gov must receive applications on or before February 15, 2017. Grants.gov will date- and time-stamp applications after they are fully uploaded. Grants.gov will not accept applications submitted after that date.

IV. What Happens After the Submission of an Application

Review and selection process

Knowledgeable persons outside NEH will read each application and advise the agency about its merits. NEH staff comments on matters of fact or on significant issues that otherwise would be missing from these reviews, then makes recommendations to the National Council on the Humanities. The National Council meets at various times during the year to advise the NEH chairman on grants. The chairman takes into account the advice provided by the review process and, by law, makes all funding decisions. More details about NEH's review process are available here.

Prior to making an award, NEH will conduct a risk assessment of successful applicants, consistent with Uniform Guidance §200.205 (see two paragraphs below the next heading for more information about the Uniform Guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget). This assessment guards against the risk that federal financial assistance might be wasted, used fraudulently, or abused. Based on its risk assessment, NEH will include in the award documents specific conditions designed to mitigate the effects of the risk.

Information for all applicants and for successful applicants

In August, approximately six months after the application deadline, NEH will notify applicants by e-mail whether they will be offered a Creating Humanities Communities grant. Institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications will receive award documents by e-mail in August 2017. Award documents will identify the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements that pertain to successful applications. The Grant Management section of the NEH website outlines all the responsibilities of award recipients, including anti-lobbying restrictions, in great detail. Applicants may obtain the evaluations of their applications by sending a letter to the Office of Challenge Grants, National Endowment for the Humanities, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20506, or an e-mail message to challenge@neh.gov.

In September 2015 NEH adopted without exception a new government-wide regulation for federal awards, referred to as the "Uniform Guidance." The Uniform Guidance applies to all NEH awards and is aimed at reducing the administrative burden on award recipients and improving accountability of federal financial assistance for tax payers. (See 2 C.F.R. Part 200: *UNIFORM ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS, COST PRINCIPLES, AND AUDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AWARDS*.) NEH will identify in each grantee's award documents the relevant terms, conditions, and administrative requirements from the Uniform Guidance with which the grantee must comply.

Help NEH eliminate fraud and improve management by providing information about allegations or suspicions of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism), or unnecessary government expenditures, during the period of award performance, to the NEH Office of the Inspector General. You can find details on how to report such allegations and suspicions here.

V. Additional Information

Contact information for the program and Grants.gov

Office of Challenge Grants
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506
202-606-8309
challenge@neh.gov

Grants.gov: www.grants.gov
Grants.gov help desk: support@grants.gov
Grants.gov customer support tutorials and manuals:
http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-tools-and-tips.html
Grants.gov support line: 1-800-518-GRANTS (4726)

Privacy policy

Information in these guidelines is solicited under the authority of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 956. The principal purpose for which the information will be used is to process the grant application. The information may also be used for statistical research, analysis of trends, and Congressional oversight. Failure to provide the information may result in the delay or rejection of the application.

Application completion time

The Office of Management and Budget requires federal agencies to supply information on the time needed to complete forms and also to invite comments on the paperwork burden. NEH estimates that on average it takes fifteen hours to complete this application. This estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, researching, gathering, and maintaining the information needed, and completing and reviewing the application.

Please send any comments regarding the estimated completion time or any other aspect of this application, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to the Chief Guidelines Officer, at guidelines@neh.gov; the Office of Publications, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (3136-0134), Washington, D.C. 20503. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

☐ **Verify and if necessary update your institution's Entity record, or create an Entity record for your institution, at the System for Award Management (SAM).** Complete at least four weeks before the deadline.

☐ **Verify your institution's registration or register your institution with Grants.gov.** Complete at least two weeks before deadline.

☐ **Download the application package from Grants.gov.** The program resource page on NEH's website has a direct link to the package. (Note that Grants.gov tells you to download the "application instruction" as well as the "application package." The "application instruction" is this document, so there's no need to download it.) Alternatively, you can search Grants.gov for this program. The program resource page also has a direct link to the instructions for completing five of the six parts of the package. (Instructions for preparing the sixth part are in this document.)

☐ **Complete the following forms contained in the Grants.gov application package.**

1. Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational

2. Supplementary Cover Sheet for NEH Grant Programs

3. NEH Matching Request Form

4. Project/Performance Site Location(s) Form

5. Attachments Form—Using this form, attach the parts of your application as described in the guidelines:

   ATTACHMENT 1: Narrative (name the file "narrative.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 2: Budget (name the file "budget.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 3: Participant biographies (name the file "bios.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 4: Letters of commitment and support (name the file "letters.pdf")

   ATTACHMENT 5: Supplementary materials (name the file "supplementary.pdf")

6. Budget Narrative Attachment Form (also known as the Budget Narrative File)—Using this form, attach **only** a copy of your institution's current federally negotiated indirect-cost rate agreement (or an explanation why you are not attaching such an agreement). (See the Grants.gov instructions for institutional applicants, which are available on the program resource page, for additional information.)

Your attachments must be in Portable Document Format (.pdf). We cannot accept attachments in their original word processing or spreadsheet formats. If you don't already have software to convert your files into PDFs, many low-cost and free software packages will do so. You can learn more about converting documents into PDFs here.

Upload your application to Grants.gov. NEH **strongly** suggests that you submit your application no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the day of the deadline. Doing so will leave you time to contact the Grants.gov help desk for support, should you encounter a technical problem of some kind. The Grants.gov help desk is now available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (except on federal holidays), at 1-800-518-4726. You can also send an e-mail message to support@grants.gov.

Be sure to read the document (PDF) that explains how to confirm that you successfully submitted your application. It is your responsibility as an applicant to confirm that Grants.gov and subsequently NEH have accepted your application.

TIMELINE

Until February 15, 2017: Contact Office of Challenge Grants program staff (at 202-606-8309 or challenge@neh.gov) with questions and for advice (optional)

January 16, 2017: Submit draft application (optional) by this date

January 18, 2017: Create or verify your institution's Entity record at the System for Award Management by this date

February 1, 2017: Register your institution (or verify its registration) with Grants.gov by this date

February 1, 2017: Grant period for successful applicants begins on this date

February 15, 2017: Submit application through Grants.gov by this date

March-April 2017: peer review panels take place

July 2017: meeting of the National Council on the Humanities, followed by funding decisions

August 2017: applicants are notified of the funding decisions

August 2017: institutional grants administrators and project directors of successful applications receive award documents by e-mail

February 1, 2018, 2019, and 2020: Annual date after notification by which the grantee must submit certification of the gifts required to claim the year's installment of federal funds

January 31, 2021: Grant period ends; all grant funds must be expended by this date